

THE
DEFENDERS

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

25¢

22

APR
02152

THE DEFENDERS

IN THE ALLEYWAYS
OF HARLEM—
THE SONS
OF THE SERPENT
STRIKE!

AND THIS TIME EVEN
THE **DEFENDERS**
MAY NOT BE ABLE TO
STOP THEM!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: **THE DYNAMIC DEFENDERS!** TM

STEVE GERBER / SAL BUSCEMA / MIKE ESPOSITO / G. JETTER, LETTERER / LEN WEIN
WRITER / LAYOUTS / FINISHED ART / STAN G., COLORIST / EDITOR

FANGS OF FIRE AND BLOOD!

HER NAME IS VALKYRIE... OR PERHAPS BARBARA. SHE IS A WARRIOR-WOMAN, A SWORD-WIELDING FURIE... OR PERHAPS A YOUNG NEWLYWED, A COLLEGE GRADUATE, INCLINED TO Dabble IN MYSTICISM. WHICH, SHE DOES NOT KNOW.

IF SHE HEARD HER HUSBAND'S VOICE, SAW HIS FACE, EVEN FELT HIS TOUCH... SHE WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE HIM.



FOR THOUGH HER BIRTH CERTIFICATE READS "BARBARA DENTON", THOUGH THE ARCHIVES OF COBBLER'S ROOST, VERMONT, CONFIRM SHE WAS WED TO ONE JACKSON R. NORRIS... THE AGGARDIAN MAGIC OF THE ENCHANTRESS HAS ROBBED HER OF ALL BARBARA'S MEMORIES.

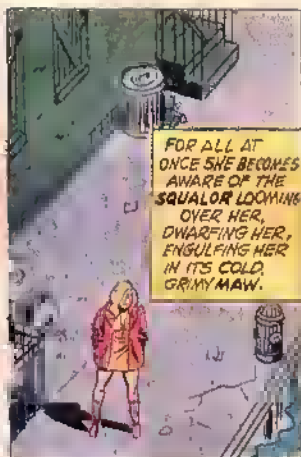
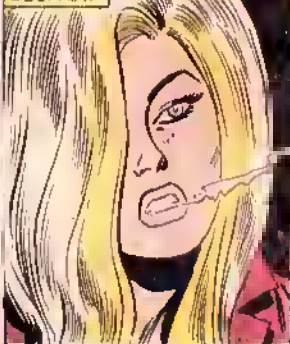
THE DEFENDERS is published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. Published monthly. Copyright © 1975 by Marvel Comics Group. A Division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Vol 1, No. 22, April, 1975 issue. Price 25¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate \$3.50 for 12 issues. Canada \$4.25. Foreign \$5.50. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in the U.S.A.

SMALL WONDER, THEN, THAT SHE WANDERS THE STREETS OF LOWER MANHATTAN THIS CHILL JANUARY NIGHT LOST IN THOUGHT, OBVIOUS TO HER SEAMY SURROUNDINGS...



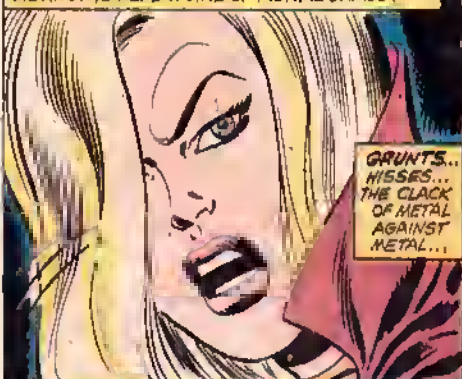
...UNTIL...

THE SOUND OF HER BOOT STRIKING AN EMPTY WHISKEY BOTTLE INTERRUPTS HER BROODING... AND YET REINFORCES HER SENSE OF ALONENESS AND DESPAIR.



FOR ALL AT ONCE SHE BECOMES AWARE OF THE SQUALOR LOOMING OVER HER, DWARFING HER, ENGULFING HER IN ITS COLD GRIMY MAW.

BUT THE ESSENCE OF A SLUM IS NOT TO BE FOUND MERELY WITH THE EYE. SUCH A PLACE HAS ITS OWN DISTINCTIVE REPERTOIRE OF AURAL STIMULI.

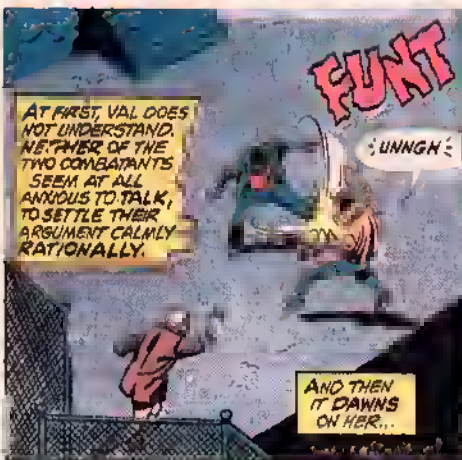


GRUNTS... HISSES... THE CLACK OF METAL AGAINST METAL...

EVEN ON SO BITTER A NIGHT AS THIS... TEMPER MAY FLARE, PASSIONS MAY BURN...



MEN MAY DIE!



AT FIRST, VAL DOES NOT UNDERSTAND. NEITHER OF THE TWO COMBATANTS SEEM AT ALL ANXIOUS TO TALK, TO SETTLE THEIR ARGUMENT CALMLY RATIONALLY.

UNNGH

AND THEN IT DAWNS ON HER...

HOW MUCH HAVE THEY TRULY TO LOSE BY KILLING... OR DYING? THE KENT'S MAY BE DEAR, BUT LIFE IS CHEAP DOWN THESE DARK STREETS.



STILL, THAT IS HARDLY A JUSTIFICATION FOR SUCH BRUTALITY.

AND SO HER STEELY GRIP ARRESTS THE KNIFE'S FLUNGE.



A WOMAN! A STINKIN' YELLOW-HAIRED--WHO MADE THIS YOUR BUSINESS; SISTER? BEAT IT!

GET OUTTA HERE...OR I CUT YOU, TOO!



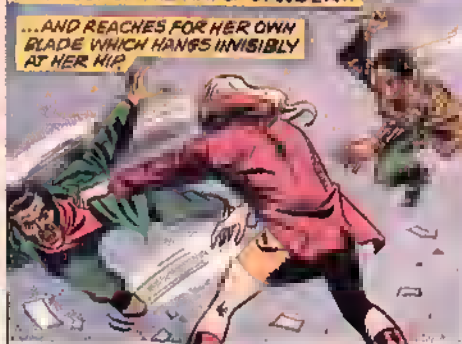
NO. I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO TAKE THIS MAN'S LIFE WHILE I AM PRESENT TO PREVENT IT. HAND YOUR KNIFE TO ME...OR I SHALL HAVE TO TAKE IT FROM YOU.

YOU CRAZY, WHITE LADY?

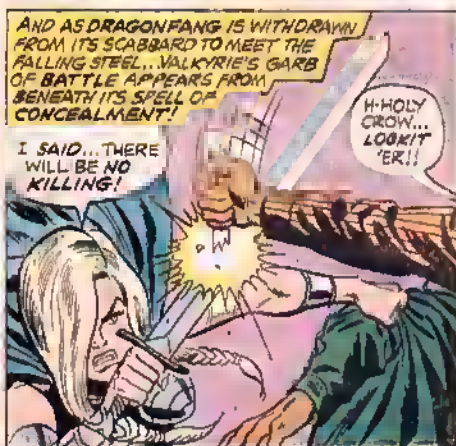


THIS AIN'T PARK AVENUE, BLANCA--A MAN IS A MAN--EL MACHO--DOWN HERE, SEE? I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM NO WOMAN!!

BEFORE VAL CAN REPLY, THE SECOND COMBATANT IS ON HIS FEET AGAIN... DAGGER POISED... LUNGING AT HIS OPPONENTS UNWARY BACK, IN A SINGLE FLUID MOTION, SHE SHOVS THE FIRST YOUTH OUT OF THE WAY OF DANGER...



...AND REACHES FOR HER OWN BLADE WHICH HANGS INVISIBLY AT HER HIP



AND AS DRAGONFANG IS WITHDRAWN FROM ITS SCABBARD TO MEET THE FALLING STEEL... VALKYRIE'S GARB OF BATTLE APPEARS FROM BENEATH ITS SPELL OF CONCEALMENT!

I SAID...THERE WILL BE NO KILLING!

H-HOLY CROW... LOOKIT 'ER!!



FURTHERMORE, I AM NOT IMPRESSED BY THESE SKINNY LITTLE TOYS YOU CALL WEAPONS...

...NOR BY THE FATUOUS POSTURING WITH WHICH YOU SHORE UP YOUR FRAIL



"I AM CERTAIN THERE MUST BE TRUE MEN WHO DWELL IN THESE STREETS...BUT YOU ARE HARDLY AMONG THEIR NUMBER.

"A MAN'S STRENGTH AND CHARACTER ARE NOT MEASURED BY THE LENGTH OF HIS BLADE...

... BUT BY THE BOLDNESS OF HIS HEART."

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE



THEY DISAPPEAR AROUND A CORNER AND VALKYRIE BREATHES A SIGH OF RELIEF...THEN DRAWS IN AN ABRUPT STARTLED GASP!



A WOMAN'S--BUT FROM WHERE?



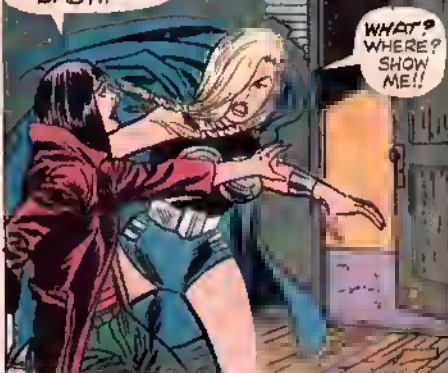
HER CONTEMPT FOR THE TWO KNIFE-WIELDING TOUGHS RAPIDLY DISSIPATES...



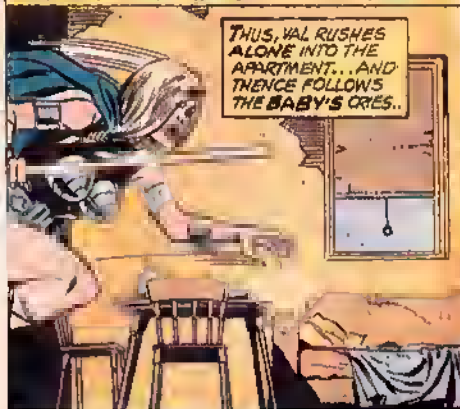
WAS HER LECTURE AS INANE AS THEIR BRAVADO, SHE WONDERS...



N-NO...NO, IN THERE...MY BABY...IT'S GOING TO KILL MY BABY!!

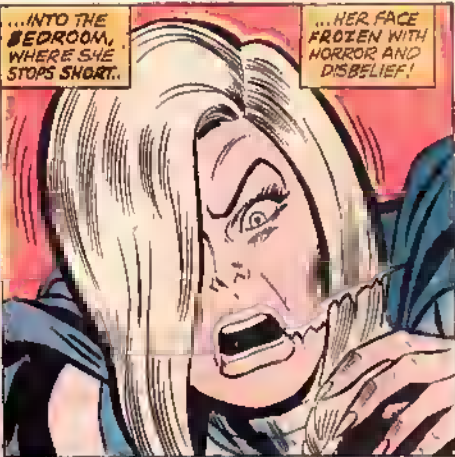


BUT THE YOUNG WOMAN IS TOO HYSTERICAL WITH FEAR, SHE STANDS ROOTED TO THE SPOT, SOBBING...



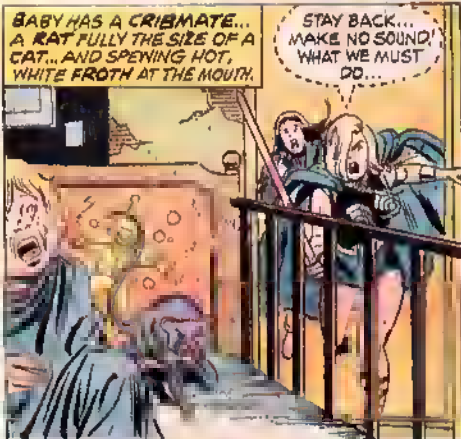
THUS, VAL RUSHES ALONE INTO THE APARTMENT... AND THENCE FOLLOWS THE BABY'S CRIES...

...INTO THE BEDROOM, WHERE SHE STOPS SHORT.



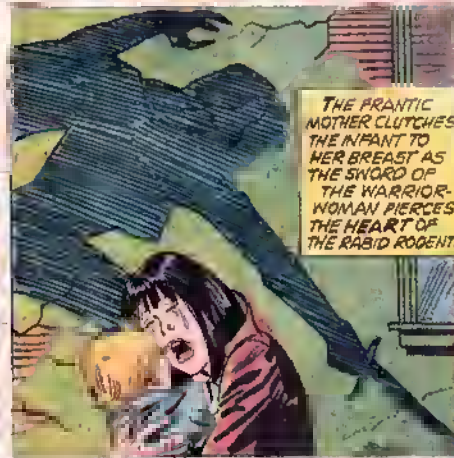
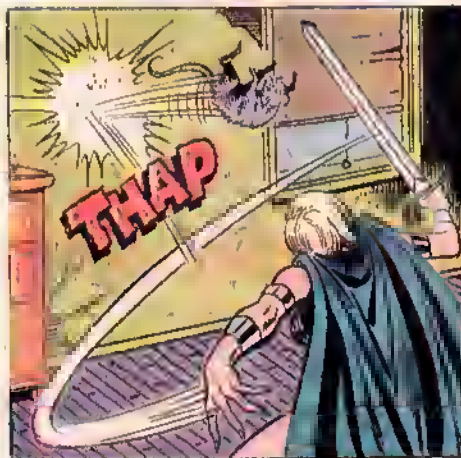
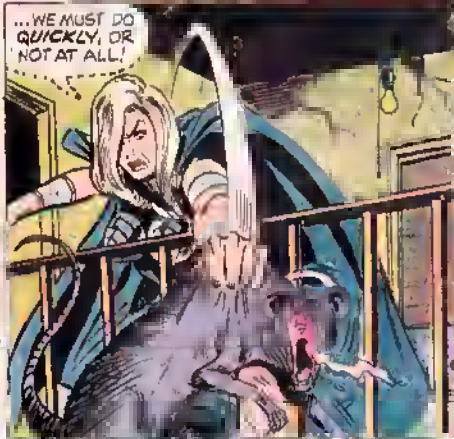
...HER FACE FROZEN WITH HORROR AND DISBELIEF!

BABY HAS A CRIBMATE... A RAT FULLY THE SIZE OF A CAT... AND SPENING HOT, WHITE FROTH AT THE MOUTH.



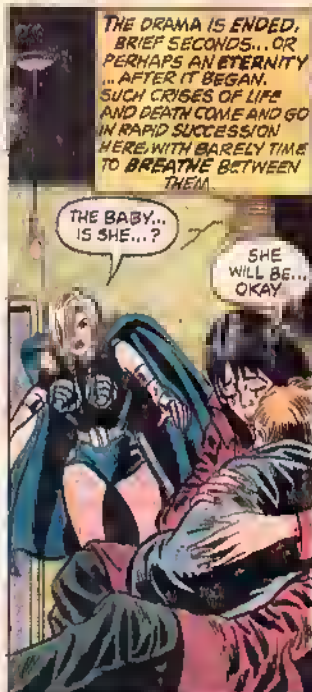
STAY BACK... MAKE NO SOUND! WHAT WE MUST DO...

...WE MUST DO QUICKLY, OR NOT AT ALL!



THE PRANTIC MOTHER CLUTCHES THE INFANT TO HER BREAST AS THE SWORD OF THE WARRIOR-WOMAN PIERCES THE HEART OF THE RABID ROGENT.

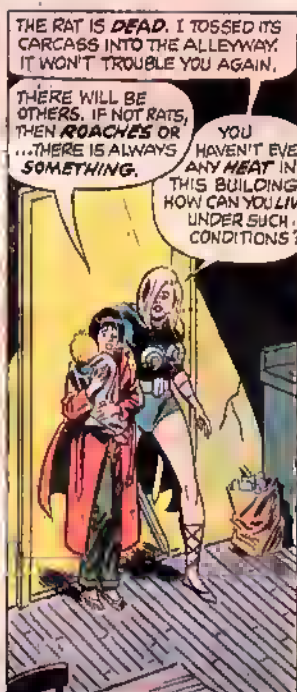
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE



THE DRAMA IS ENDED, BRIEF SECONDS...OR PERHAPS AN ETERNITY... AFTER IT BEGAN, SUCH CRISES OF LIFE AND DEATH COME AND GO IN RAPID SUCCESSION HERE, WITH BARELY TIME TO BREATHE BETWEEN THEM.

THE BABY... IS SHE...?

SHE WILL BE... OKAY



THE RAT IS DEAD. I TOSSED ITS CARCASS INTO THE ALLEYWAY. IT WON'T TROUBLE YOU AGAIN.

THERE WILL BE OTHERS. IF NOT RATS, THEN **ROACHES** OR...THERE IS ALWAYS **SOMETHING**.

YOU HAVEN'T EVEN ANY MEAT IN THIS BUILDING. HOW CAN YOU LIVE UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS?



HOW CAN I LIVE UNDER ANY OTHER CONDITIONS? MY RENT IS \$150 A MONTH... THAT IS WHAT **YOUR "WELFARE"** SAYS MY BABY AND I CAN LIVE ON! I EAT **DOG FOOD**... SO SHE CAN HAVE **MILK!** YOUR INFLATION...YOUR **WELFARE**...

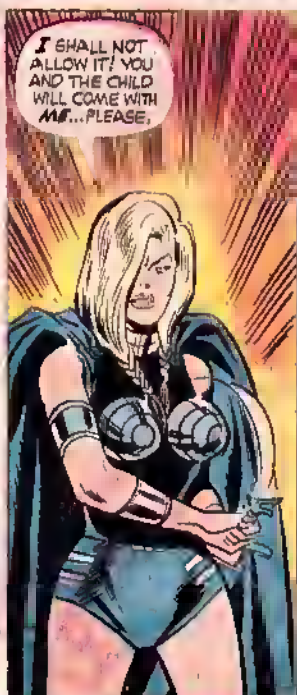
I... AM SORRY. I DID NOT MEAN...



YOUR KIND... NEVER DOES, YOU TALK AND YOU "STUDY" AND YOU TALK SOME MORE, BUT YOU NEVER MEAN ANYTHING.

M. MAYBE... WE SHOULD HAVE LET HER DIE...IT MIGHT'VE BEEN BETTER... BETTER FOR ME... BETTER FOR HER...

NO! YOU MUST NEVER ALLOW YOURSELF TO DESPAIR SO!



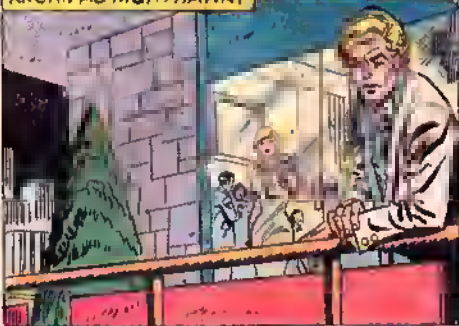
I SHALL NOT ALLOW IT! YOU AND THE CHILD WILL COME WITH ME... PLEASE.



WE SHALL FIND YOU A WARM PLACE TO SLEEP...AND A GOOD DINNER... AND PERHAPS A SOLUTION TO YOUR SITUATION.

SOLUTION? HA! GIVE TO ME A MAGICAL SWORD LIKE YOURS... AND I WILL SHOW YOU THE ONLY SOLUTION.

BUT MANHATTAN IS AN ISLAND OF CONTRASTS. WHILE SOME OF ITS DENIZENS STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN THE BYWAYS OF ITS DARK, BROODING UNDERBELLY, OTHERS PARTY ON THE FASHIONABLE UPPER EAST SIDE... AMONG THEM, WEALTHY KYLE RICHMOND, ALTER EGO OF THE DEFENDER KNOWN AS NIGHTHAWK.



THOUGH FOR HIM, CONVIVIALITY DOES NOT COME EASILY TONIGHT.

KYLE... WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE? IT'S FREEZING.

AND THE PARTY'S INSIDE.

I KNOW, GINNY. I'M SORRY.



I'M JUST NOT UP TO **SOCIALIZING**. I GUESS. I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME.

RIGHT. YOU SH^d SHOULD LOCK YOURSELF UP LIKE A HERMIT, LIGHT A CANDLE, AND KEEP A VIGIL..

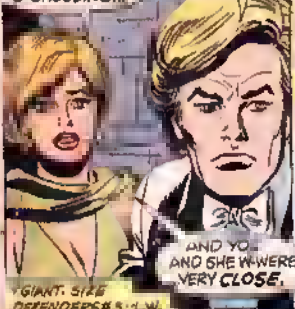
...TIL TRISH COMES HOME.



K KYLE, FORGIVE ME. I DIDN'T MEAN TO SWAP, BUT I HATE TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS. YOU CAN'T GO ON B-BROODING...

SHE LOST AN ARM, GINNY. SHE'S OUT THERE WANDERING AROUND SOME PLACE.

AND YOU... AND SHE W-WERE VERY CLOSE.



GIANT SIZE DEFENDERS # 5: L.W.

BUT THAT'S STILL NO REASON FOR YOU TO CATCH PNEUMONIA. YOU'RE COMING IN... IF I HAVE TO BRAG YOU GODDLY.

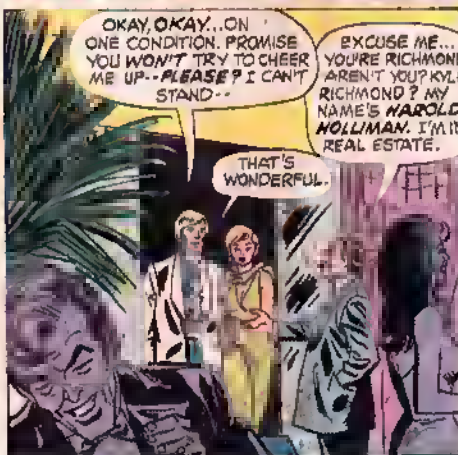
I KNOW... TOO WELL. I ONLY WISH YOU AND I...



OKAY, OKAY... ON ONE CONDITION. PROMISE YOU WON'T TRY TO CHEER ME UP-- PLEASE? I CAN'T STAND--

EXCUSE ME... YOU'RE RICHMOND, AREN'T YOU? KYLE RICHMOND? MY NAME'S HAROLD HOLLIMAN. I'M IN REAL ESTATE.

THAT'S WONDERFUL.

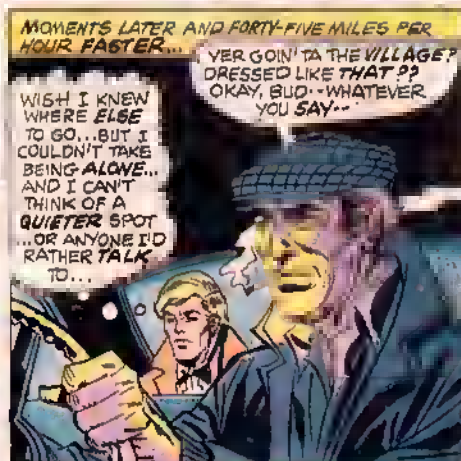
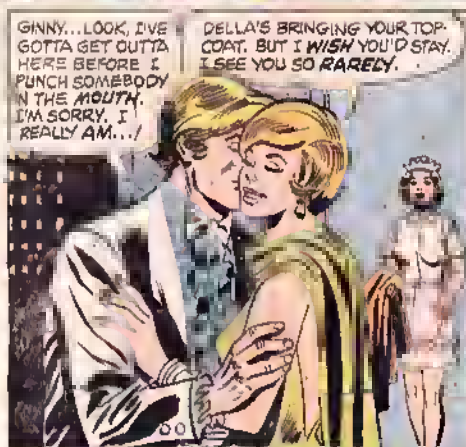


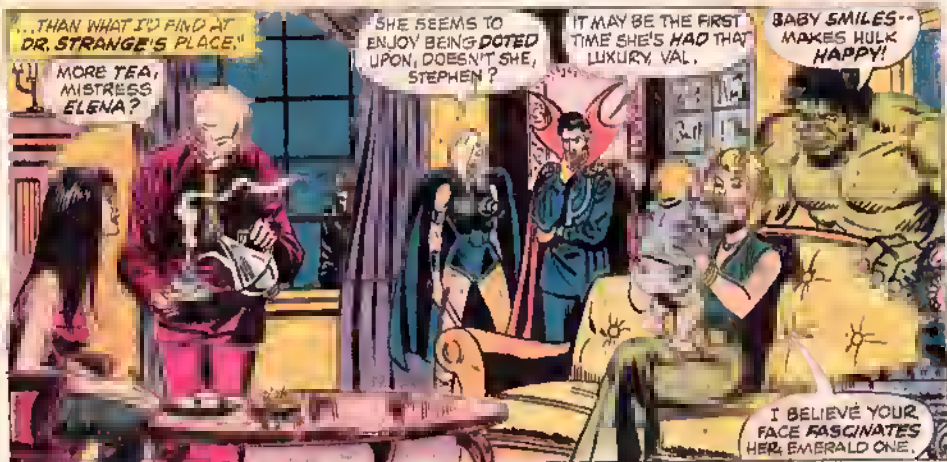
KYLE... IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK...

LATER, GINNY... I'VE BEEN WAITING ALL EVENING TO MEET OUR YOUNG TYCOON HERE, AND NOW I'VE GOT 'IM. RIGHT, KYLE?



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

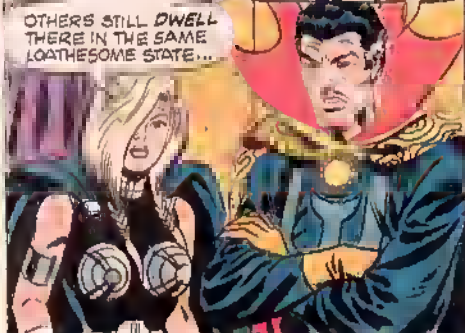




DID I DO THE CORRECT
THING STEPHEN... BRINGING
HER HERE? I COULD NOT
LEAVE HER IN THAT
HORRID SETTING, YET...

THIS IS YOUR FIRST
EXPERIENCE WITH
POVERTY, ISN'T IT?
I CAN GENSE THE
FRUSTRATION YOU FEEL.

OTHERS STILL DWELL
THERE IN THE SAME
LOATHESOME STATE...



IT IS NOT WITH-
IN EVEN OUR
POWER TO
SOLVE THE
PROBLEM, VAL
...BUT WE MAY
TAKE CERTAIN
STEPS IN THIS
PARTICULAR
INSTANCE.

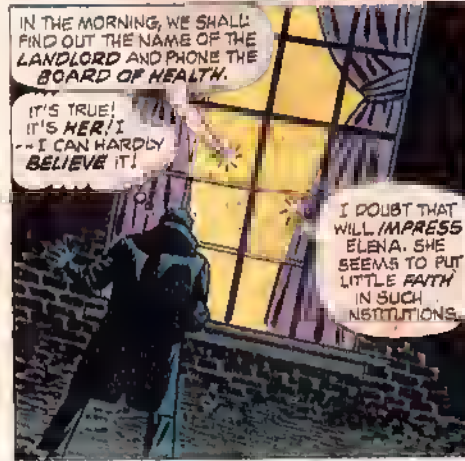
THE
CONDITIONS
IN ELENA'S
BUILDING ARE
INTOLERABLE
...AND
ILLEGAL.



IN THE MORNING, WE SHALL
FIND OUT THE NAME OF THE
LANDLORD AND PHONE THE
BOARD OF HEALTH.

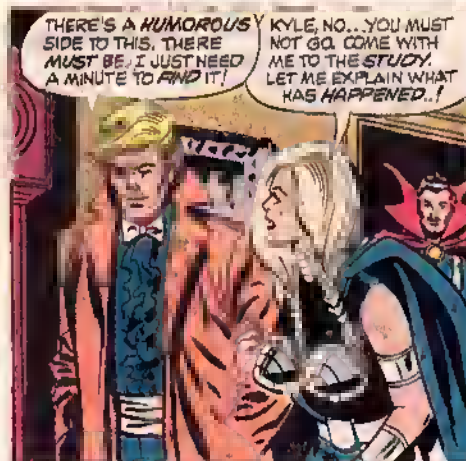
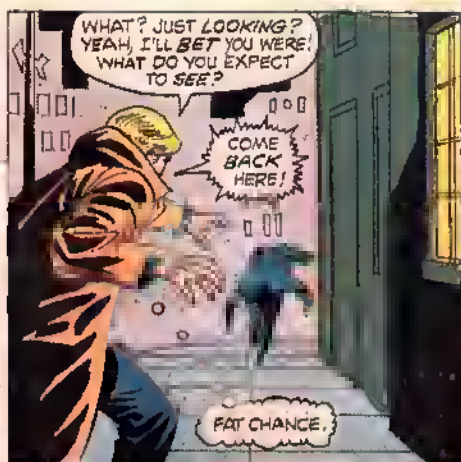
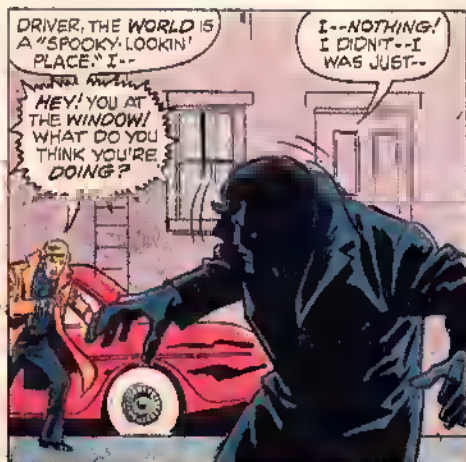
IT'S TRUE!
IT'S HER! I
--I CAN HARDLY
BELIEVE IT!

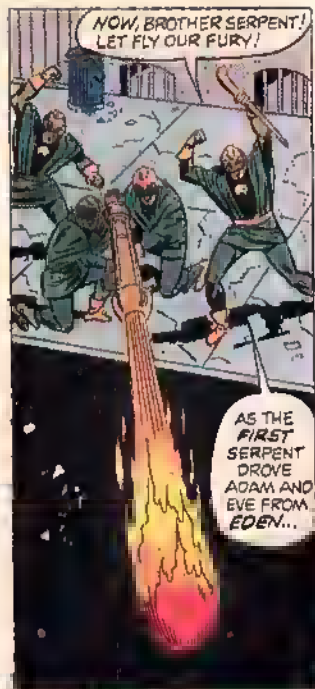
I DOUBT THAT
WILL IMPRESS
ELENA. SHE
SEEMS TO PUT
LITTLE FAITH
IN SUCH
INSTITUTIONS.



THIS IS IT?
YUWANNA GET
OFF HERE? SPOOKY.
LOOKIN' JOINT, BUT--
YER THE BOSS!

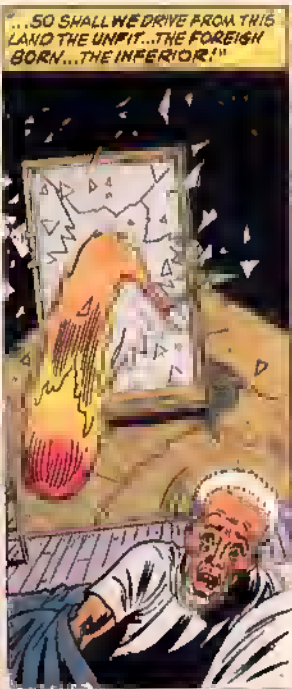




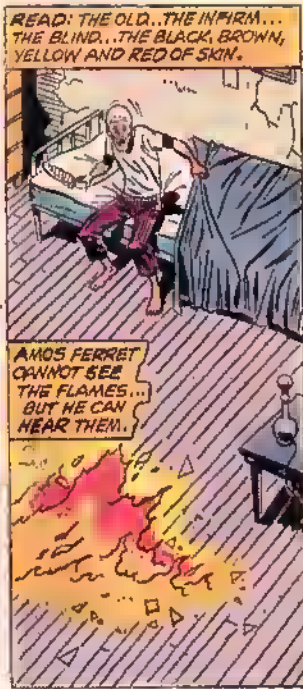


NOW, BROTHER SERPENT!
LET FLY OUR FURY!

AS THE
FIRST
SERPENT
DROVE
ADAM AND
EVE FROM
EDEN...



...SO SHALL WE DRIVE FROM THIS
LAND THE UNFIT...THE FOREIGN
BORN...THE INFERIOR!"



READ: THE OLD...THE INFIRM...
THE BLIND...THE BLACK, BROWN,
YELLOW AND RED OF SKIN.

AMOS FERRET
CANNOT SEE
THE FLAMES...
BUT HE CAN
HEAR THEM.



HIS AGED LIMBS ARE TOO STIFF
TO ALLOW HIM TO RUN FROM THE
INFERNO THAT A MOMENT AGO
WAS HIS HOME... BUT HIS LUNGS
WILL STILL LET HIM SHOUT.

SO HE CRIES
OUT FOR HELP...
ONCE, TWICE,
A THIRD TIME...
HELP!!

THEN THE
ROAR OF
THE FIRE
DROWNS
OUT HIS
VOICE.



THE HEAT OF THE BLAZE DRIVES
HIM BACK AGAINST A WALL...
COARSE GREY SMOKE FILLS HIS
CHEST... HE CRIES OUT ONE LAST
TIME... AS THE TONGUES OF
FLAME LICK AT HIS CLOTHING
AND HIS BODY! AND THEN HE
CAN CRY NO MORE...



THE SONS OF THE SERPENT
RACE AWAY AS THE SMELL OF
BURNT FLESH FILLS THE AIR.

WHILE BACK AT THE SANCTUM OF THE SORCERER SUPREME...

YOU AND THE BABY MAY STAY THE NIGHT, IF YOU WISH, ELENA.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU, I WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO STAY.

BUT THERE ARE THINGS I NEED FOR THE BABY... AT HOME.

DIAPERS AND STUFF, HUH? NO PROBLEM. I'LL GO BACK WITH YOU TO THE APARTMENT, AND WE'LL PICK THEM UP...

HULK WANTS TO GO WITH GIRL, TOO! HULK LIKES GIRL AND BABY!

I COULD TRANSPORT THE BABY'S TOYS AND CLOTHING HERE BY MYSTIC MEANS... BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE FIRST. HAND THE CONDITIONS IN ELENA'S BUILDING. PERHAPS WE SHOULD ALL GO ALONG.

THUS, SHORTLY AFTERWARD, THE FULL COMPLEMENT OF DEFENDERS TAKES TO THE SKY, ELENA RIDING WITH WALKYRIE ASTRIDE ARAGORN.

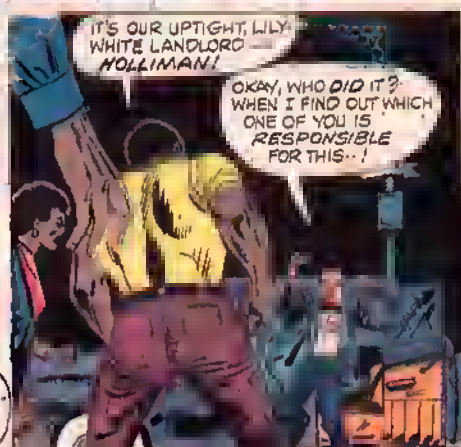
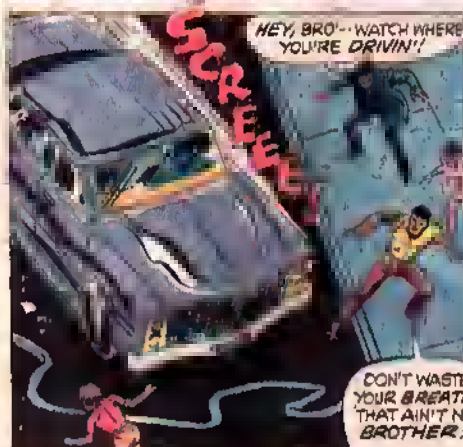
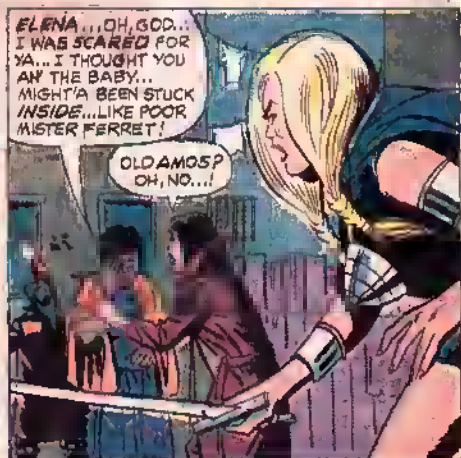
BUT WHEN THEY REACH THEIR DESTINATION...

DOC!
LOOK!!

THE BUILDING... IT'S GONE UP IN FLAMES... NOTHING LEFT BUT A SHELL OF BRICK!



THE MIGHTY THOR IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WITH THE EVIL LOKI! — ON SALE NOW!

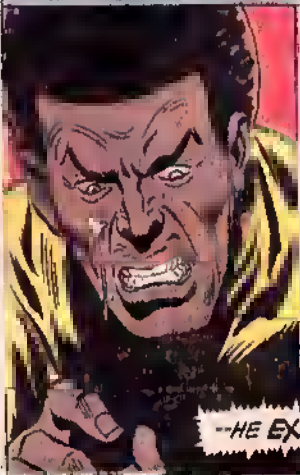


YOU GOT A SCREW LOOSE SOME-
WHERE, MAN! I'LL GRANT YA--
THIS IS THE WARMEST WE BEEN
ALL WINTER, BUT EVEN US "DUMB
DARKIES" AIN'T FOOL ENOUGH TA...

DON'T YOU
SPEAK TO
ME THAT
WAY, YOU
BIG BLACK
APE!
TAKE YOUR
FILTHY HANDS
OFF ME!



THE BLACK MAN DOES REMOVE
HIS HANDS... AND, AS HOLLIMAN
REQUESTED, HE SPEAKS NOT
ANOTHER WORD. BUT HIS EYES
BULGE... HIS BROW FURROWS...
HE GRITS HIS TEETH... THE
MUSCLES AND VEINS OF HIS
NECK STAND OUT IN BOLD,
PULSING RELIEF... AS THE WAD
OF SPITTLE TRICKLES DOWN
HE CONTAINS HIS RAGE NO LONGER...



HE EXPLODES!!

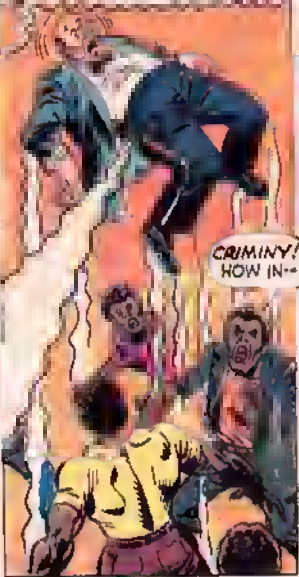
RIGHT ON, MAN! SLUG HIS
FAT, WHITE BELLY!



DOC, THEY'RE ANGRY
ENOUGH TO KILL HIM!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP
THEM-- FOR THEIR
SAKE AS WELL
AS HIS!

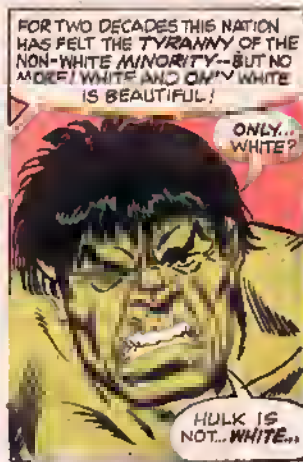
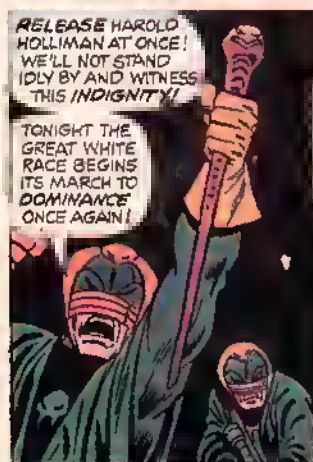
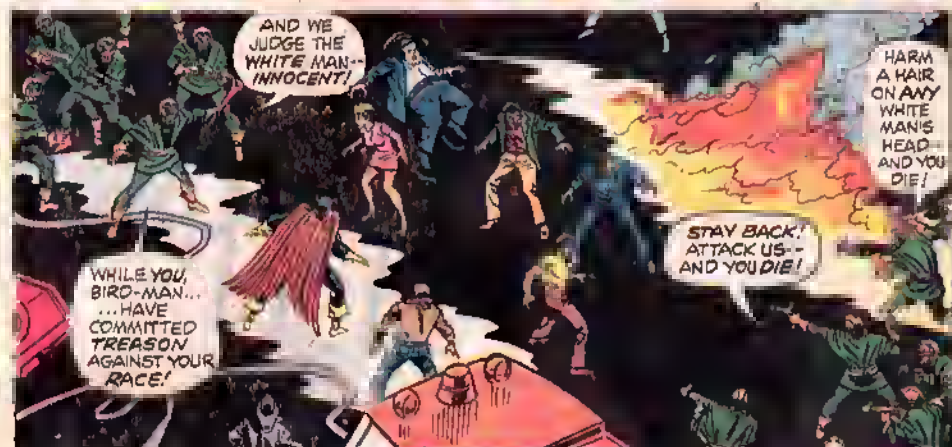
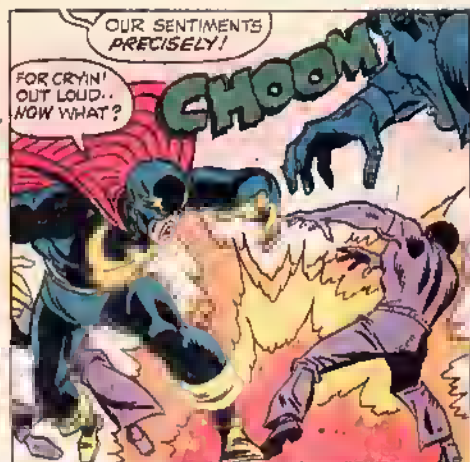


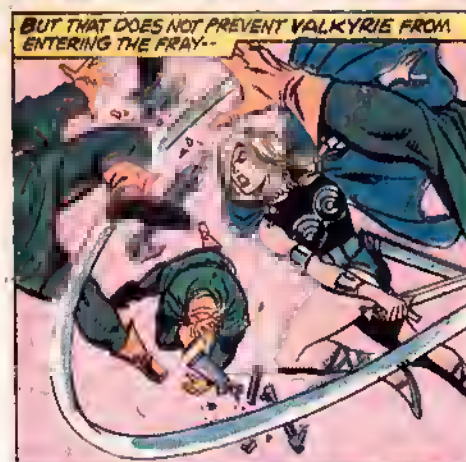
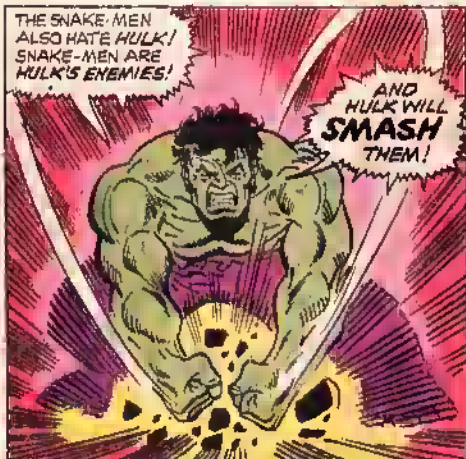
BY THE NAME OF OMNIPOTENT
OSHTUR,
DO I SEVER ALL GRAVITY'S TIES.
MAY THERE BE NO VICTIM THIS
COLD NIGHT.
LET THE IMPERILED ONE RISE!



NEVER
MIND
HOW!







AND IN MOMENTS A FULL-SCALE
RIOT RAGES IN THE STREET!



VAL--NIGHTHAWK--HULK--STOP!
I BEG YOU! AS THE LEVEL OF
VIOLENCE ESCALATES, SO DOES
THE DANGER OF LOSS OF LIFE!



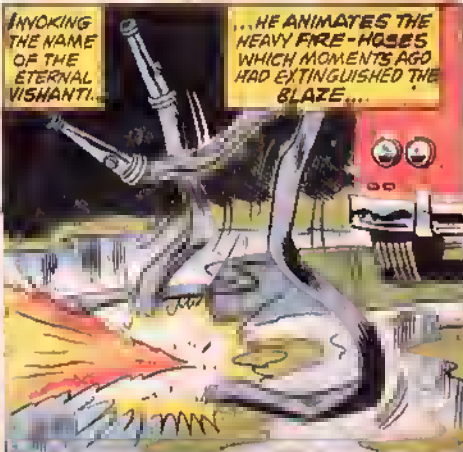
ALAS, SO TOO
DOES THE NOISE
OF THE BATTLE.

THE SORCERER'S ALLIES
CANNOT EVEN HEAR
HIS PRETTY SPEECH
ABOVE THE DIN.



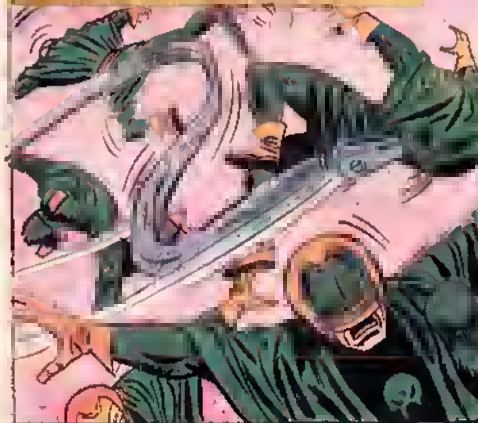
AND SO
THE MAGE
EMBARKS
ON HIS OWN
COURSE OF
ACTION.

INVOKING
THE NAME
OF THE
ETERNAL
VISHANTI...



...HE ANIMATES THE
HEAVY FIRE-HOSES
WHICH MOMENTS AGO
HAD EXTINGUISHED THE
BLAZE...

...AND SENDS THEM (IRONICALLY?) SNAKING
THROUGH THE HATE-MADDENED MOB...



...FELLING FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE, WITHOUT
REGARD TO RACE, CREED, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN.





SOON, ONLY STRANGE, THE HULK, AND THE SERPENTS' SQUADRON LEADER--WHO CHOSE TO SUPERVISE THE BATTLE FROM A DISTANCE--ARE LEFT STANDING.

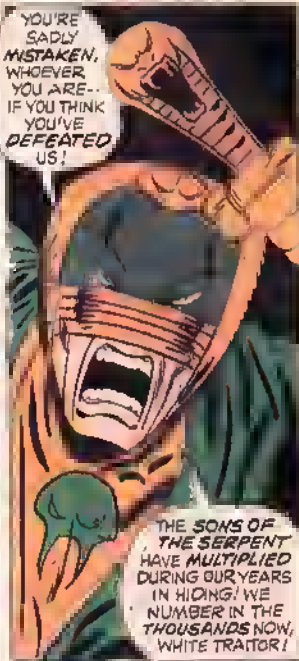
AND, PURELY BY COINCIDENCE, OF COURSE, THAT LEADER SUDDENLY REALIZES:



OUR WORK IS DONE HERE, SERPENT-BROTHERS! LET US DISPERSE AND REGROUP LATER AT THE REGULAR MEETING PLACE!

A DECISION MOST WISE, SCALY ONE!

AND I SUGGEST YOU NOT INFLICT YOUR LOATHESOME PRESENCE UPON US AGAIN!



YOU'RE SADLY MISTAKEN, WHOEVER YOU ARE-- IF YOU THINK YOU'VE DEFEATED US!

THE SONS OF THE SERPENT HAVE MULTIPLIED DURING OUR YEARS IN HIDING! WE NUMBER IN THE THOUSANDS NOW! WHITE TRAITOR!



WE SHALL RETURN--IN FORCE!

AND YOU SHALL BE MADE TO REGRET YOUR CHOICE TO STAND BESIDE THESE VERMIN!

YOU AND YOUR MOTLEY GROUP WILL PAY FOR YOUR TREASON--YOUR CRIME AGAINST THE WHITE RACE--WITH YOUR LIVES!!

YELLOW JACKET RETURNS! SO DO THE SONS OF THE SERPENT--WITH A MASTER PLAN, YET! AND SO DOES THE PEEPING TOM--WITH THE MOST SHOCKING SECRET OF ALL!

...AND THE SNAKES SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH!!!